

T-513

SPIRIT OF WYE TOWN (log canoe)
St. Michaels, Maryland

SPIRIT OF WYE TOWN is a 27'1-1/2" sailing log canoe in the racing fleet. She is log-built of five logs with carvel-fitted rising planks, a sharp clipper bow, square stern, and a beam of 5'7-3/4". Her sailing rig consists of two masts with adjustable rake that carry a foresail, mainsail, and large jib. Built in 1972 by Sidney H. Dickson on the Wye River, SPIRIT OF WYE TOWN gains her significance by being a member of the Chesapeake Bay racing log canoe fleet and carrying on a tradition of racing on the Eastern Shore of Maryland that has existed since the 1840's. SPIRIT OF WYE TOWN is of special interest as having been built during a recent mini-revival of interest in log canoe racing in the late 1960's and early 1970's and of being one of three new canoes built post-1970 to join the racing fleet.

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

Survey No. T-513

Magi No. 2105135833

DOE ☐ yes ☐ no

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic SPIRIT OF WYE TOWN

and/or common log canoe

2. Location

street & number Mill Street ☐ not for publicationcity, town St. Michaels ☐ vicinity of congressional district

state Maryland county Talbot

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Sidney H. Dickson

street & number RFD 1 telephone no.: 745-5852

city, town St. Michaels state and zip code Maryland 21663

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. liber

street & number folio

city, town state

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title

date ☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Survey No. T-513

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date of move _____

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

SPIRIT OF WYE TOWN is a 27' 1-1/2" sailing log canoe built in the Tilghman fashion for racing. She has a beam of 5' 7-3/4" and carries two masts and a racing rig. The canoe has a sharp stem and a square stern, the stern quarter being full instead of hollow. She was built in 1972 by Sidney H. Dickson on the Wye River. Her log hull is painted white with yellow trim and brightwork. She is privately owned and races under No. 18.

SPIRIT OF WYE TOWN was built of five yellow pine logs from a half model designed by her builder. The logs are edge-fastened with wooden tree nails rather than iron drifts. There are three frames across the hull and several stub frames carrying the carvel-fitted rising strakes. The sheer strake is lapped and topped with a beaded rubrail. Overall the canoe has a flat sheer, higher at the stern than at the bow. Her bow is sharp, with a short clipper bow. The stern is square--sharp at the rudder-point but with a small duck-tail above a very hard chine, forming a full stern. The centerboard is cased in a trunk. There is a rudder carried outboard on pintles and a frame outrigger, or bumpkin, overhanging the stern.

The boat is rigged with two adjustable masts set into box-like, thwart-held maststeps, reinforced with metal. The bowsprit is small and short, set up with a bobstay adjusted by a turnbuckle and with two bowsprit shrouds. There are wooden braces from the bowsprit aft to the hull. The rig is removable. Both mainsail and foresail have clubs and sprits. There are extra sails for racing and springboards to counterbalance the boat under sail. Washboards of varnished planks, carried to a point fore and aft, form a peapod-shaped cockpit lined with a coaming. Washboards, short cleat-rails on the washboards, and spars are varnished bright. The sheer rail is painted yellow and the hull white. There are varnished splashboards at the bow.

On her longhead the boat carries trailboards with SPIRIT OF WYE TOWN in gold letters on a white ground, decorated with red-white-and-blue shields and gilt leaves and scrolls. The longhead sports a large eagle billethead.

According to an article published at the time of her building in April, 1972, SPIRIT OF WYE TOWN was designed by Dickson to have the rig and general appearance of the ISLAND BIRD, the plumb bow of the SANDY, the rockered forefoot of OLIVER'S GIFT, and deadrise like the ISLAND LARK. Her "tumble home" aft was said to resemble an ancient feature of Chesapeake canoes dictated by the shape of the log itself and her stern was said to retain some of the fullness found in canoes of colonial times.

8. Significance

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Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1972 Builder/Architect Sidney Dickson

check: Applicable Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D
and/or

Applicable Exception: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Level of Significance: ☐ national ☐ state ☐ local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

This vessel is significant as being one of the last 22 surviving traditional Cheasapeake Bay racing lot canoes that carry on a tradition of racing on the Eastern Shore of Maryland that has existed since the 1840's. In addition, it is a surviving representative of the oldest indigenous type of boat on the Bay -- the working log canoe - which was developed in the 17th century by early European settlers from the aboriginal dugout canoe.

Used for transportation and for harvesting the rich bounty of the Bay, log canoes changed little over the centuries. Constructed of from two to seven logs and ranging in length from 20 to 35 feet, they were rigged with one or two sharp-headed spritsails with or without a jib set on raking, unstayed pole masts. Easily and cheaply constructed, some 1000 existed in Bay waters in the 1880s. The working canoes first began to be raced in 1840 and by the 1870s area boatbuilders were building canoes specifically for racing, with lighter, thinner hulls and sharper lines. As mast heights increased to increase sail area the canoes became inherently unstable, necessitating the use of springboards and human ballast. Also part of the racing rig is the outrigger added for balance and to enable the sail tender to sit beyond the overlarge mainsail.

With the invention of the gasoline engine many log canoes were converted to power for oystering, but were then converted back to sail as interest in racing waxed and waned over the years. After peak years of popularity in the 1880s and 1890s, interest in log canoe racing waned in the first two decades of the 20th century only to be revived again in the 1920s. The popularity of racing, spearheaded by the Miles River Yacht Club, continued unabated until the present day, although the number of vessels active in the fleet has varied considerably.

SPIRIT OF WYE TOWN is significant as having been built during a recent mini-revival of interest in log canoe racing in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It is one of 3 canoes built post-1970 to join the racing fleet (others: FAITH P. HANLON, TENACEOUS). Its builder, Sidney Dickson, had previously restored PERSISTENCE and became interested in the challenge of building a log canoe. He worked from a half model combining traditional elements and innovations like her carved square stern with a slight reverse rake. He returned to early 19th century practice by fastening his 5 logs with locust treenails instead of iron drifts, so that he would be able to plane the hull thinner without damaging his tools. He aimed for light weight by designing the canoe so the logs could be tapered and thinned down and by restricting the amount of wood added topsides. SPIRIT OF WYE TOWN gains interest for fact that her building was documented by Dickson.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. T-513

Sidney Dickson, "Build a Log Canoe? Why Bother?", c. 1972 (source unknown, see files at Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum)

Jack Bonsal, "Dig These Canoes!", The Ensign, April, 1972

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

Quadrangle scale _____

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A

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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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E

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F

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Anne Witty/ M.E. Hayward

organization Maryland Historical Society

date 5/84

street & number 201 W. Monument St.

telephone 685-3750

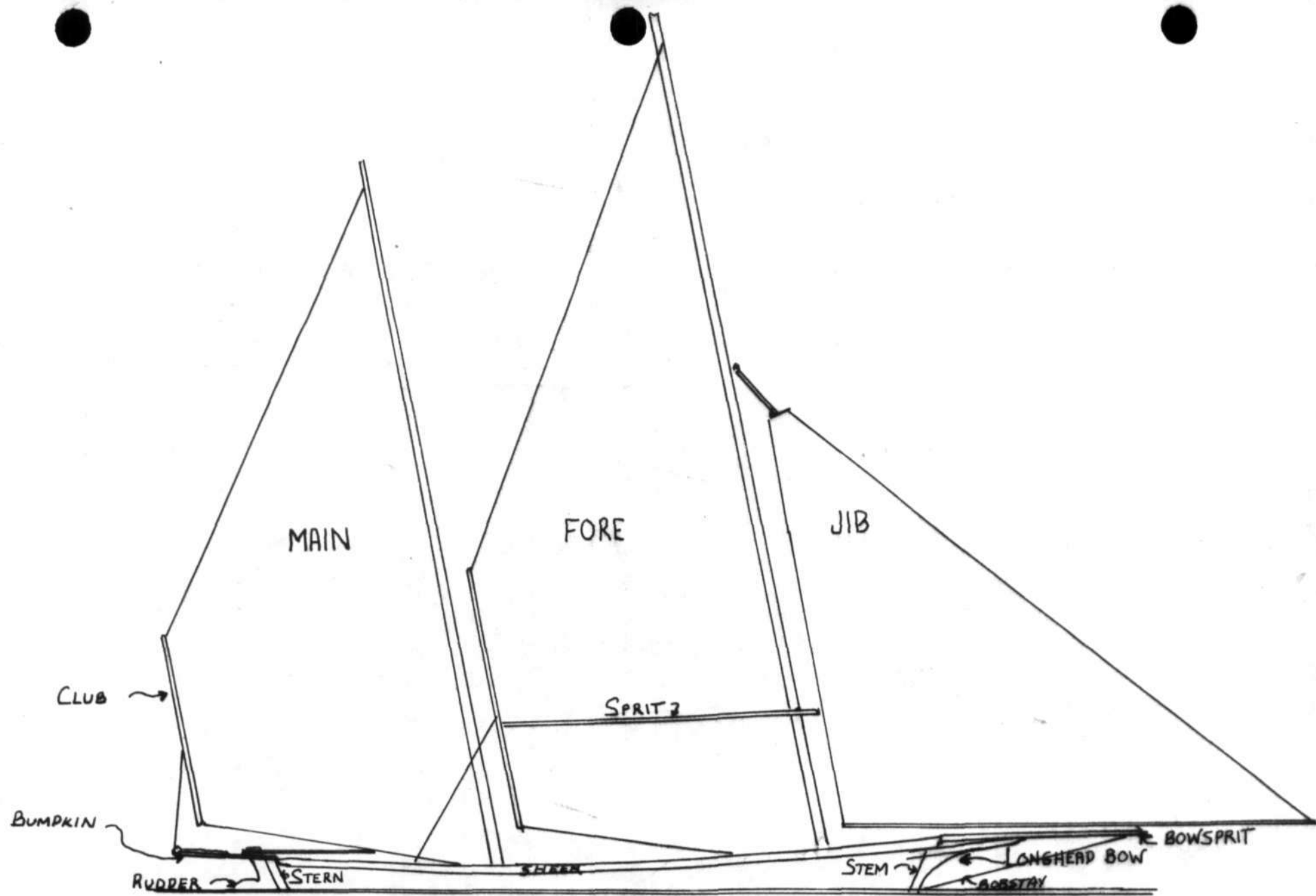
city or town Baltimore

state Maryland 21201

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
Shaw House
21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 269-2438



SAIL PLAN OF TILGHMAN ISLAND CANOE after drawing by J.G. Earle

T-513
Log Canoe SPIRIT OF WYE TOWN
Precise location unknown
St. Michaels
Saint Michaels Quad.
Talbot Co.





T-513

SPIRIT OF WYE TOWN

stern - under sail
St. Michaels, Md.

A.E. Witty 7/84



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SPIRIT OF WYE TOWN
St. Michaels, Md

port side
M. C. Wootton 5/84



T-513

SPIRIT OF WYE TOWN
St. Michaels, Md

Stern view, under sail
A.E. Witty 7/84

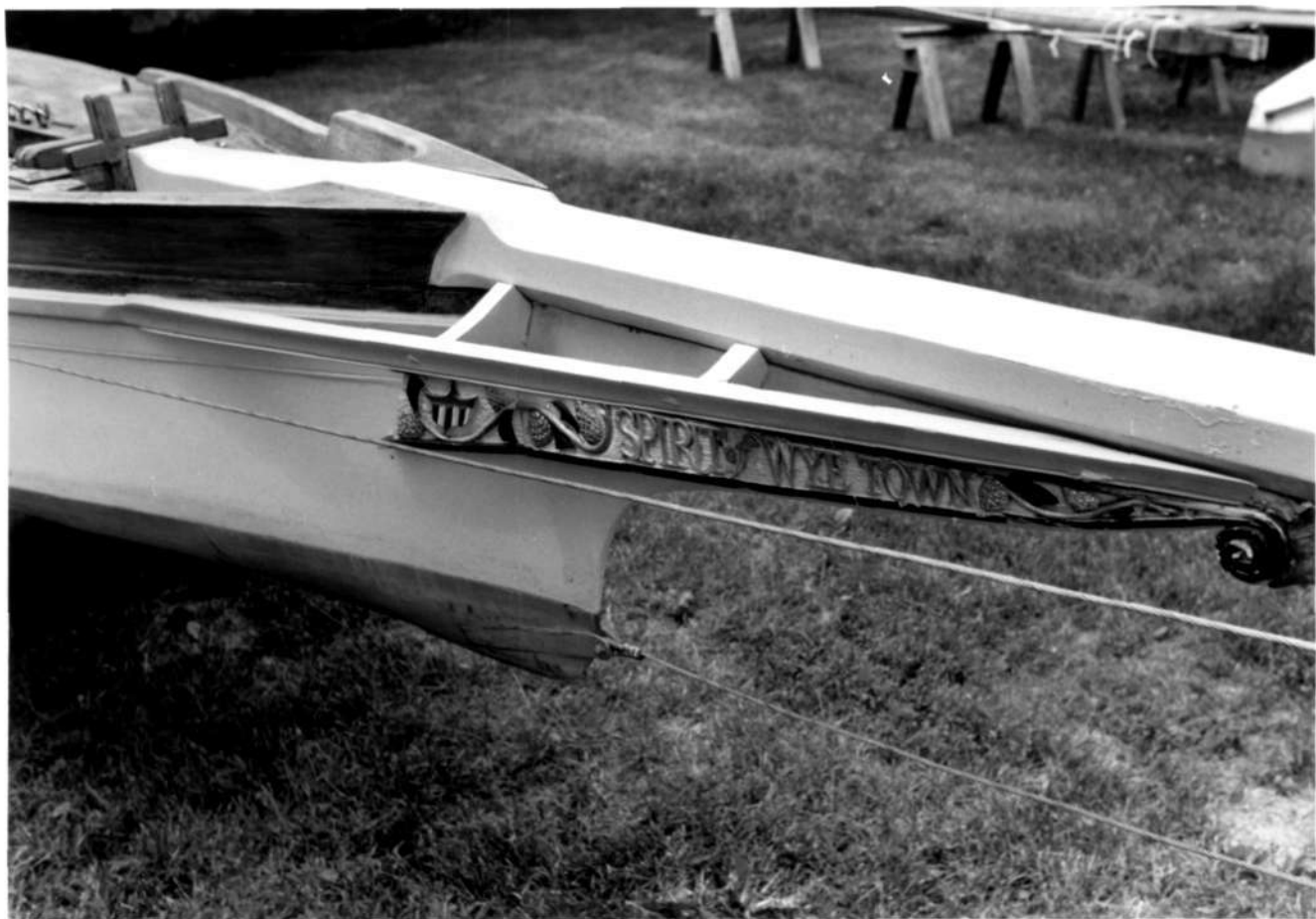


T-513

SPIRIT OF WYE TOWN

port side - bow
St. Michaels, Md.

M.C. Wootton 5/84



T-513

SPIRIT OF WYE TOWN
St. Michaels, Md

bow - trailboard
M. C. Wootton 5/84



T-513

SPIRIT OF WYE TOWN
St. Michaels, Md

stern

M. C. Wootton 5/84



T-513

SPIRIT OF WYE TOWN
St. Michaels, Md.

Interior hull
M.C. Wootton

5/84